

Climate change neighborliness networking & resilience resources

**2022: Climate change affects us all.
Some of us are more at risk than others.
'Neighborliness networking' can help.
Winter will be here soon.**

10/31/22

Neighborliness networking: Cold weather arrives very soon. Let's help our neighbors and ourselves stay warm, well fed, warm, and less isolated during the winter months.

Resources to improve resilience: Many agencies, community groups and municipalities across NY State and at the national level offer advice and assistance for dealing with extreme weather and climate change. This report brings some of that information together in one place for people to use.

Outcomes/Actions: Get involved. Focus on what you can do this fall and winter to help others. Remember that when being part of a neighborliness network helps others, it also helps you. Help improve our understanding of the local scope and severity of climate change impacts, and strengthen the list of available resources for everyone to use.

This information has been compiled by a group of community leaders, agency staff and non-profit groups in Seneca, Cayuga, and Tompkins County. Much of the information provided for the Cayuga Lake area applies across NY State, and nationwide. Residents of other counties and states can find equivalents to many of these resources. See contact information on the final page.

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I. Introduction: Climate change in our daily lives, locally

We are being affected by climate change right now. Extreme rainfall and drought in summer, and prolonged cold temperatures in winter are happening locally, across the Finger Lakes region of central NY State. The year's four seasons are shifting. These are the leading edge signals of local climate change.

We in the Finger Lakes are not experiencing the dire types of climate change impacts that are harming other parts of the USA and our planet. In fact, we may become a refugee area for people fleeing global change extremes elsewhere.

However, the shifts in temperature and rainfall locally are harming people who have grown accustomed to the idea of a year consisting of stable, unchanging, four seasons. That reliability is gone. Our wells are drying up during droughty seasons. Our lake beaches are shut to swimming. Yards, driveways, and fields are torn up by erosion from heavy rains, and our basements flood and get moldy. Many of us lack the insurance coverage to pay for climate-related damage.

In the summer months, people are suffering health effects at home, at school, and on the job from hotter temperatures and broiling sunshine. We are seeing problems with gardening and farming due to too much or too little, too high or too low. Unpredictability is the new normal. Less water, less food, and health effects from heat – these problems are going on right now, right here.

In winter, our families and friends struggle to stay warm during the extreme “polar vortex” cold spells. It's no longer a “cold snap” that we can endure - instead it's deep cold, indoors and out, for weeks at a time. Our homes and bodies can become too cold to work, think, or play. We struggle to pay for more energy for our homes and workplaces; and we try to find out how to retrofit our homes, convert to new energy sources, and how to pay for these improvements.

People are also dealing with the **depression, sadness and isolation** that can result from weather extremes, and from fear of climate change.

Some people are more directly and negatively affected by these challenges than others: income, age, and isolation make a big difference in our ability to cope and adapt to change.

- **People with fixed and low incomes** cannot pay for needed improvements.
- **The old and young** are less resilient in extreme warm and cold conditions. Existing health problems are worsened by exposure to these temperature extremes.
- **People isolated** by their location, inability to travel, and other restrictions may suffer alone, not knowing that they can get help and advice from their neighbors, community, and public agencies.

‘Neighborliness networking’ & climate change resources for all to use

This report is based on summer-autumn 2022 conversations among residents and community leaders in Tompkins, Seneca and Cayuga counties of NY State. In it we lay the groundwork for improved wintertime ‘neighborliness networking’ to help us get through the winter together. This report also provides links to resources that individuals, families, and businesses can use to improve safety and resilience in the face of extreme weather events and disasters.

People may ask – what can we do locally to address something happening globally and at such a large scale? Even if we are recycling, changing our energy use, and composting, we feel powerless. One effective place to focus locally is on building community resilience and connections. Why is this a good response to climate change? Read on!

II. Building a ‘neighborliness network’ in your neighborhood.

We have just been through a very hot summer. People may suffer due to excess heat and reduced water supply. They will need support again, next spring.

Right now, winter is on its way. Based on what has happened over the past few years, the weather may get very cold and stay that way for extended periods of time, with snow and ice conditions that keep people at home. The price of home heating and lighting is rising. Not everyone can afford to be warm. Your neighbors – and you – may need help.

The 2020 US Census states that 88.5 to 95.2 percent of our area’s homes have computers and 81.5 to 86.1 percent have broadband account access. Those living in poverty range from 11.7 to 12.4 percent of the population in Cayuga, Seneca, Tompkins, and Schuyler counties.

Are you and your neighbors getting the information needed to protect yourselves from climate change? This winter, special effort may be needed to help your family and others stay warm, and not become isolated. The focus of this report is on the rural upland areas of the Cayuga Lake and Seneca Lake watersheds – the families and older folks, in rural communities, in senior living centers, often on their own, living in rural houses and apartment buildings. But of course, improved neighborhood communication and resilience is also needed in suburban areas, and downtown. These ideas will work anywhere.

Two approaches to ‘neighborliness networking’

Conscious, deliberate neighborliness can make a big difference. Who are your neighbors? Probably five or six homes near you, and maybe a couple of people a few miles away that you like to check in with. Are you a member of an in-person or online neighborhood group, such as the Next Door network (<https://nextdoor.com/>)? Consider introducing these ideas to them.

- **Developing a neighborhood hazard response plan**

You and your neighbors can develop a simple hazard response plan, based on advice from NY State's Department of Health.

General information: <https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/emergency/>

Specific steps to take:

- https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/emergency/families_individuals_caregivers/
- [Aware Prepare Information - Be Aware and Prepared!](#)
- [Types of Emergencies](#)
- [Families and Individuals](#)
- [Infants and Children \(Information for Parents and Caregivers\)](#)
- [Individuals with Special Needs](#)
- [Pregnant Women](#)
- [Community-Based Care Center Toolkit](#)
- [Helping Children After Tragic Events: Stop Watching, Start Talking](#)

Your local plan can include friendly gestures that tell people they are not forgotten.

In winter, people turn inward when they have to live cold.

They get quiet, and they don't go out or get exercise.

They may live in a cocoon of blankets, staring at a computer, phone, or tv screen.

Even if they insist things are fine, can you knock on a door, drop off a blanket, a hot water bottle, a snack?

Is someone in midwinter having a birthday?

Can you mail greeting cards to your neighbors?

Help lighten the load and brighten their day.

Midwinter is hard for everyone, and is becoming more difficult.

There's information about mental health resources in the Appendices, below.

- **Ready Together: "Let's be ready, together. A regenerative approach to preparedness and resilience."**

From the Ready Together website: "This work of preparing better? It starts in our own homes. We're initiating Ready Together all over the country. We know disasters are coming. We know they are here. We know they will come again. We get ready together – talking, learning, taking action now. We deal with disasters by looking at them directly, sitting together talking about what we're facing and what we are going to do. It's not all doom and gloom. Remember that family three houses down you've wanted to meet? It's time to do that now."

The ReadyTogether website: <https://readytogether.net/>

Check out part 1 of their handbook, Facing It All Together, and if interested in next steps, fill out their online form.

III. Protecting home, finances, and lives from extreme weather impacts

What should you do to prepare for an environmental disaster? You may not know when or what form an extreme weather event will take, but you need to be prepared. You do not want to lose your money and home, and valuables. Here are some tools for to prepare ahead of time. And if nothing ever happens? Your life will be better organized and you will feel more secure.

National Preparedness Month

Each year, September is officially National Preparedness Month: “National Preparedness Month is an observance each September to raise awareness about the importance of preparing for disasters and emergencies that could happen at any time.” – from the Ready.gov website: <https://www.ready.gov/september>

This is a great seasonal prompt to plan for your family and community ahead of events. The online resources provided at the Ready.gov website are available year round. In 2021 the focus was on the Latino community, and in 2022 on the Black and African American community: <https://www.ready.gov/september#theme>

Sign up to receive emergency notifications, weather information, more

At the www.Ready.gov/alerts site, learn about these free resources:

WEAS - Wireless emergency alerts via cell towers;

EAS - Emergency Alert System the national public warning system, sent via all methods nationwide simultaneously, from the President, state and local authorities;

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards – national network of radio stations broadcasting weather information based on your location;

FEMA app – This free app allows you to receive real-time weather and emergency alerts, send notifications to loved ones, locate emergency shelters in your area, get preparedness strategies and more. Download to phone or other device.

Family-focused preparedness

Your family may not be together if a disaster strikes, so it is important to know which [types of disasters](#) could affect your area. Know how you’ll contact one another and reconnect if separated. Establish a family meeting place that’s familiar and easy to find.

Make a Family Emergency Plan in four steps, using the fillable form:

<https://www.ready.gov/plan>

Information to prepare for disasters and emergencies: <https://www.ready.gov/be-informed>

Family-focused low and no-cost preparedness: You can do these today, to prepare for an emergency, via the Ready.gov website <https://www.ready.gov/low-and-no-cost>

Family and business financial and property preparedness

A *New York Times* article is the source of the following information. “Preparing financially, before the storm hits,” Tara Siegel Bernard, August 23, 2022.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/23/business/storm-weather-home-insurance.html>

- **Assess risks:** These two online tools can help you prepare your specific home and business locations for weather hazards:

FEMA’s National Risk Index: Find out how vulnerable your county is to natural hazards <https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/map>

Home and Property Risk Factor: Find out what climate risks your home or business faces over the next 30 years <https://riskfactor.com/> The Risk Factor website provides suggestions [for hazards](#) facing specific properties, and many regions have programs offering residents financial help to harden their homes against specific hazards, though funding is often limited.

- **Evaluate insurance needs:** The insurance market varies by locality and the hazards inherent to the area. Standard homeowners’ and renters’ insurance policies do not cover all hazards. Floods and [earthquakes](#) always require separate coverage. Wind and hail (hurricane) coverage may carry its own deductible as part of your homeowners’ insurance, or it may be a separate policy, at least in certain areas. Wildfires, meanwhile, are often incorporated into many policies.
- **Read new and existing policies closely:** Always choose “replacement value” coverage where you can. Don’t forget about [cars](#) and other vehicles. Comprehensive auto coverage, required by auto lenders, generally provides protection against natural disasters. But older, low-value cars may not have comprehensive (and it may not be worth the cost anyway).
- **Take inventory:** Creating an inventory of your home’s contents can maximize what you’ll receive when filing a claim with your insurer. A variety of tools can help. United Policyholders has a [home inventory spreadsheet](#), the National Association of Insurance Commissioners has a [related app](#), and there are [other inventory apps](#) as well. The least time-consuming method might be to walk through each room of your home with your mobile phone’s video camera, narrating the contents along the way. Don’t forget to open up closets, cabinets and drawers, as well as storage spaces and the garage. Then email the file to yourself, or store it securely online (and perhaps on an external hard drive).
- **Protect valuables:** If you have expensive collections or valuables (fine art, instruments, jewelry), you might consider a personal articles policy — which generally covers all risks — since many homeowners’ insurance policies cap coverage.

- **Collect and safeguard key documents:** Keep all important documents — wills, advance directives, insurance policies, Social Security cards, birth and marriage certificates, passports, tax returns — in a [fireproof and waterproof box](#). Consider storing electronic copies on an external hard drive (using password protection) or in the cloud.
- **FEMA’s financial emergency kit** has an exhaustive [check list](#) of what to gather and protect, along with a 41-page [emergency financial first-aid kit](#) that can be filled out online and stored in a secure place. The American Red Cross has [a version](#) of its own. If you have to leave your home, experts suggest taking key documents with you in case you need to file a claim with your insurer or apply for FEMA [assistance](#).
- **Keep emergency funds:** Having access to money for any basic needs is also something to consider. If there’s no electricity and A.T.M.s aren’t working, you’ll probably need cash. Stash some in a safe place. If you receive any federal benefits through paper checks, now is the time to [switch to](#) automatic electronic deposits. Ditto for any other payments you may receive by mail. In the absence of longer-term emergency savings accounts, think about what else you might tap if you absolutely had to.
- **Envision evacuation and what you would take:** Walk through your home and think about what’s irreplaceable — it probably fits into a plastic box. Define what those things are, or create a list, in case someone knocks on your door and says, ‘You have five minutes.’

IV. APPENDICES – Resources & tool kits (*work in progress!*)

A. Protecting the mental health of yourself and others

- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is now 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.** 988 is the new three-digit dialing code that routes callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), and is now active across the United States.

When people **call, text, or chat 988**, they are connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing Lifeline network. These trained counselors listen, understand how your problems are affecting you, provide support, and connect you to resources if necessary. **The previous Lifeline phone number (1-800-273-8255) will always remain available** to people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis.

Tompkins County Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service: call any time 607-272-1616.
More information <https://ithacacrisis.org/>

Seneca County Suicide Prevention Coalition: call/text 988 any time. County level information <http://senecasuicideprevention.org/>

Cayuga County Crisis Line: call 315-251-0800 any time. More information about getting the help you and others in your life need for overdoses, suicidal thoughts, and loneliness <https://www.cayugacounty.us/1271/Crisis>

Schuyler County Suicide Awareness for Everyone: call/text 988 any time. For more information about getting help locally <http://schuylercounty.us/600/Suicide-Awareness-For-Everyone-SAFE>

- **Mental health help**

The Mental Health Association of Tompkins County is part of a national network. People with mental illness are the starting point and primary audience: <http://www.mhaedu.org>
The Mental Health Association in New York State provides information about other NY county programs: <https://mhanys.org/>

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (<https://www.nami.org/Home>) is an important resource. NAMI is the largest national grassroots organization addressing mental illness. It first serves families and friends of people with mental illness but also directly serves people with mental illness. The national webpage has fantastic information on mental illness and links to the state chapters (affiliates). NAMI NYS ([NAMI New York State \(naminys.org\)](http://www.naminys.org)) supports the local affiliates and their website has information on how to get in touch with local affiliates ([Affiliates by Name - NAMI New York State \(naminys.org\)](#)).

A local chapter (affiliate), NAMI Finger Lakes, covers Tompkins and Cortland Counties (<https://www.namifingerlakes.org/>) and another in Cayuga County ([Affiliate Details - NAMI New York State \(naminys.org\)](#)) and Syracuse ([Affiliate Details - NAMI New York State \(naminys.org\)](#)). **NAMI's local support line: 607-273-2462.**

- **Isolation & loneliness:** A challenge for many people, worsened by the COVID pandemic. We need others in our lives! These programs keep people engaged, involved and in communication.

Tompkins County's Office for the Aging provides Services to Combat Isolation: <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa/social-isolation> "Social Isolation has been an issue for many older adults that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the Office for the Aging we have several programs available to combat social isolation and loneliness. For more information on these or any of our services please call us at 607-274-5482."

Cayuga County's Office for the Aging: Get involved!
<https://www.cayugacounty.us/626/Get-Involved> join committees and activities run by and for senior citizens. Call 315-253-1226.

Seneca County's Office for the Aging provides wellness programs, congregate meals and other meals services, a Dial-A-Friend program, and a lot more. <https://www.co.seneca.ny.us/gov/community/office-aging/> call 315-539-1766.

STEPS – Seneca Towns Engaging People for Solutions. An organization for the residents of Covert, Lodi, Ovid, and Romulus: <http://www.senecasteps.org/> “To Encourage Every Individual in the Community to Reach High Levels of Social, Economic, and Personal Health... The STEPS Project encourages and supports community members to work together to improve community health. Through collaboration, we can achieve a higher level of social, educational, physical, and economic health. Do you dream of starting your own business, or have an idea that could help improve our community, or an expertise to share? Our projects are resident-driven, and our working groups meet monthly, with virtual attendance as an option.” Call 607-403-0069; email Stepscommunity@s2aynetwork.org .

Schuyler County Office for the Aging, with services for seniors and anyone with disabilities. <https://www.schuylercounty.us/157/Office-for-the-Aging> Get connected, to services and activities: <https://www.schuylercounty.us/340/Important-Links> . Call 607-535-7108.

- **Climate grief: Talking with others:** Would you like to understand and discuss your fears and worries about climate change with others? Try these resources.

Climate Awakenings: “Let's break the silence. Share your climate terror, grief, and rage with people who understand. Join a Climate Emotions Conversation - a small group sharing & listening session about the climate emergency:” <https://climateawakening.org/>

The All We Can Save Project: “The climate crisis has many folks feeling on the edge. How can we cope, care, and heal? What do our emotions have to teach us? Can climate work and leadership grow from a more rooted, powerful place? The All We Can Save Project ... develop[ed] this shortlist of resources created specifically for navigating the emotional terrain of climate:” <https://www.allwecansave.earth/emotions>

Work that Reconnects Network: “The Work that Reconnects helps people discover and experience their innate connections with each other and the self-healing powers of the web of life, transforming despair and overwhelm into inspired, collaborative action.” ~ Joanna Macy <https://workthatreconnects.org/>

- **Translation Services**

Tompkins County – <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/lep>

City of Ithaca - <https://www.cityofithaca.org/620/Language-Assistance-Plan-LAP>

Schuyler County Office for the Aging offers interpretation service for more than 200 languages. To inquire about our agencies services for the aging at no cost to you, please call (607) 535-7108.

B. COVID home test kits – where to find them for FREE & other COVID information

Generally, you can get masks and home COVID test kits for free at public libraries and municipal offices, and at some offices of elected officials (call before you go, to make sure!). Also, Medicare and other insurance policies cover some or all of the cost of several test kits per month.

Tompkins County maintains a list of free home test kit distribution sites:

<https://tompkinscountyny.gov/health/covid19/distribution>

For all other information about COVID (testing, vaccinations, trends, etc), please go to your county's Health Department website:

Tompkins County <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/health/covid19vaccine>

Seneca County <https://senecahealthdept.org/>

Cayuga County <https://www.cayugacounty.us/1610/COVID-19-Immunization-Clinics>

Schuyler County <https://schuylercounty.us/1094/COVID-19>

C. County-level information links for disaster and hazard response, food banks, home repairs

Local counties around Cayuga and Seneca Lakes are included here. Check your own county's resources online.

- **County-level emergency preparedness.**

Tompkins County – Tompkins Ready Emergency Preparedness:

<https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tompkinsready/emergency>

Seneca County – Emergency Preparedness:

<https://www.co.seneca.ny.us/gov/safety/emergency/preparedness/>

Cayuga County Health Department – Emergency Preparedness & Response:

<https://www.cayugacounty.us/798/Emergency-Preparedness-Response>

Schuyler County Public Health – <https://schuylercounty.us/745/Emergency-Preparedness-Response>

- **Food pantries, hot meals, food sharing cabinets, support eligibility & more**

MyBenefits: Statewide NY program to inform you of public program benefits eligibility:
<https://www.mybenefits.ny.gov/mybenefits/begin>

Tompkins County

Human Services Coalition - Food pantries and hot meals are listed on two calendars. Also food sharing cabinet locations, and food stamps/WIC eligibility information: <https://hsctc.org/211food/>

Seneca County

Seneca Falls free food resources - https://www.freefood.org/c/ny-seneca_falls
Southern Seneca County food pantries - <http://www.senecasteps.org/>

Cayuga County

Cayuga-Seneca Community Action - food pantries, mobile food pantry, food recovered and shared <http://www.senecasteps.org/>

FoodPantries.org - more sites, search for nearest <https://www.foodpantries.org/>

Schuyler County

Foodbank of the Southern Tier – find food <https://www.foodbankst.org/find-food/>

- **Home repair & energy assistance**

MyBenefits: Statewide NY program to inform you of public program benefits eligibility:
<https://www.mybenefits.ny.gov/mybenefits/begin>

Tompkins County Office for the Aging – Energy assistance, yard work, weatherization, more <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/cofa/Services/services.html> . Call 607-274-5482.

Seneca County Office for the Aging – Weatherization, Home repairs, Energy programs <https://www.co.seneca.ny.us/gov/community/office-aging/> call 315-539-1766.

Cayuga County Office for the Aging – Weatherization, Home repair, Energy Assistance, Senior property tax exemptions: <https://www.cayugacounty.us/597/Housing-Concerns>
Call the Office for the Aging for more information and a referral to these programs at 315-253-1226.

Schuyler County – Use the ‘mybenefits’ tool to learn what public benefits you are eligible for <https://www.schuylercounty.us/660/myBenefits>

D. NY State, federal: hot and cold weather preparedness and extreme weather programs, planning

- **Hot and cold weather advice**

Hot weather – map of NYS cooling centers (2022):

https://apps.health.ny.gov/statistics/environmental/public_health_tracking/tracker/#/CCMap

Hot weather advice, NYS Department of Health:

https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/environmental/public_health_tracking/about_pages/heat_stress/about_hs

How to stay warm in cold weather, NYS Department of Health:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/emergency-preparedness/emergencies-extreme-weather-cold-weather.page>

Cold weather advice – hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning, more:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/emergency/weather/cold/>

- **Links to federal & NYS extreme weather information planning, state and municipal programs**

EDEN is a national Cooperative Extension program and network for emergency preparedness and response. Cornell Cooperative Extension has an EDEN program, with recommendations for planning, preparing, and recovering from emergencies:

<https://eden.cce.cornell.edu/>

HHS EmPOWER Program Platform <https://empowerprogram.hhs.gov/> data and tools to inform and support state, local, tribal, and territorial efforts to protect the health of at-risk individuals that are dependent on essential health care services and or electricity-dependent durable medical equipment and devices.

NY State – climate, weather and health

<https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/weather/index.htm>

NYS training programs for local governments

<https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/weather/resilience.htm>

NYS hazard mitigation – finding funding for recovery

<https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/hazard-mitigation>

E. Science information about climate change and its impacts

Climate Change – Cayuga Lake and the Finger Lakes

Learn how climate change is affecting weather, human lives, and nature locally:

<https://www.cayugalake.org/climate-change/>

Learn what you can do to reduce climate change impacts locally:
[https://www.cayugalake.org/wp-content/uploads/CLWN-Watershed Living in a Changing Climate.pdf](https://www.cayugalake.org/wp-content/uploads/CLWN-Watershed_Living_in_a_Changing_Climate.pdf)

Learn how to protect water quality around your home:
<https://www.cayugalake.org/lake-friendly-living/>

Local-to-national climate change information sources:
<https://www.cayugalake.org/climate-change/climate-change-resources/>

The US Global Change Research Program.

This program provides constantly updated information and data about global climate change, coordinated from 13 federal agencies. Online at www.Globalchange.gov

In particular see the National Climate Assessment reports series. The 2018 report contains detailed information with many examples from around the USA.

V. 1 - Climate Science Special Report – Global/USA climate change impacts.

V. 2 – Impacts, Risks and Adaptations. What has happened to date as a result of climate change, what may happen, and things we can do about it.

This report has been developed by an informal discussion group from across the Cayuga and Seneca Lake watersheds, including participants from the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, leaders of STEPS (Seneca Towns Engaging People for Solutions), Seneca County CCE, the Village of Interlaken in Seneca County, Cayuga County Planning, Cayuga County community groups, and the Center for Sustainability and the Environment at Wells College, in Aurora. To get involved, please contact hlambert0@gmail.com. This information will be available at www.cayugalake.org and other sites. Please share widely, and make friends with your neighbors! Funding provided by the Community Foundation of Tompkins County – thank you.